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ABSTRACT

Eleven annotations from the ERIC system concern school districts' experiences with declining enrollments. Some of the abstracts deal with forecasting models; some with suggestions for expanding educational services to the community; and others with the effects that declining enrollments will have on teacher tenure and negotiation agreements. (MLF)

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The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

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Declining Enrollments

Davis, Russell G., and Lewis, Gary M. *The Demographic Background to Changing Enrollments and School Needs.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Center for the Study of Public Policy, 1976. 53 pages. ED 122 415.

Will the effort to revise educational thinking to accept enrollment drops result in a "mind-set" toward decline as strong as the "mind-set" toward growth that is currently proving so hard to discard? What will the population be like that educators must be serving by 1990? The class entering the first grade in 1980 will probably be the smallest (in terms of total national enrollment) since the decline began, but 1981 will see a slight increase at the first-grade level. While schools continue to cut back services to higher grades, they will once again have to expand services for the lower grades.

Population changes depend on birthrates, mortality rates, and migration, which is most important at the local level. The fertility rate, or number of births per 1,000 women of childbearing age, is affected by changes in economic and social conditions (including improvements in birth control technology) and has been dropping fairly steadily since 1952. Only the rapid increase in the number of women in the major childbearing years (18-34) accounts for the renewed population growth expected over the next decade or so.

The most crucial development for educators to consider is that a larger percentage of the population will be over 25 and a smaller percentage will be of school age. This will affect attitudes toward public education, the tax base, and the need for adult education and job training programs, which could make new demands on the school system.

Eisenberger, Katherine E., and Keough, William F. *Declining Enrollment: What to Do: A Guide for School Administrators to Meet the Challenge of Declining Enrollment and School Closings. AASA Executive Handbook Series, Volume 2.* Arlington, Virginia: American Association of School Administrators, 1974. 67 pages. ED 111 094.

Parents, students, teachers, and principals have enormous investments in their local schools—social, emotional, and financial. Despite the psychological pressures, however, some schools may have to close; alleviating the fears of these interested groups is probably the most important aspect of a successful school-closing policy. Community polls, coffee hours for small groups, interschool visitations by students and teachers, simulations by the board and administrators, and the channeling of energy toward constructive ends through the creation of effective task forces are just some of the ways to cope with potential problems before they develop.

Teachers in particular are adversely affected by declining enrollments. Young teachers are usually the first to be dismissed. A shift in concern by teacher organizations from salary levels to job security can be expected. The situation may be eased by early retirement incentives. Whatever solution is found, it must be planned for early and implemented systematically.

If school closure becomes necessary, the decision must be made carefully. Costs for maintenance materials, personnel, utilities, and capital outlay must be considered, and the financial benefits of selling or leasing buildings or parts of buildings must be measured against the likelihood of renewed enrollment growth. Several criteria should be considered: geographic location, academic excellence, enrollment capacity as compared with present and potential use, facility condition, and recyclability of the building and grounds.

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Eugene Public Schools. *Small Schools Task Force. Final Report.* Eugene, Oregon: 1976. 83 pages. ED 117 804.

A task force assigned to study all aspects of the possible closure of 9 small schools out of 31 elementary schools in this Oregon district concludes in this report that the smaller schools, even when they operate below capacity, offer benefits that more than make up for the expense of keeping them open. At current population growth rates for the area, the enrollment should return to capacity levels by the 1980s, though whether the students will be located near the schools is another matter.

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Considering closure from a strictly financial point of view would not take into account the value of a school to its neighborhood, effects on property values, or voter dissatisfaction that could adversely affect budget elections. On the other hand, the savings resulting from one closure would represent only "about 1/3 of 1% of the total cost of the elementary school system." The benefits in opportunity for student participation and in the creative use of extra space for both educational and community programs make maintenance of schools even at extra cost a worthwhile venture.

The report is an excellent example of how a local task force representing the community, parents, and the schools can investigate the demographic, economic, philosophical, and social dimensions of school closure and develop a practical and clearly stated policy with the uniqueness of the local situation in mind. An excellent bibliography broken down by chapter topics offers a starting point for task forces interested in achieving similar success.

Order copies from Office of Media Services, School District 4J, 200 North Monroe, Eugene, Oregon 97402. $0.75.
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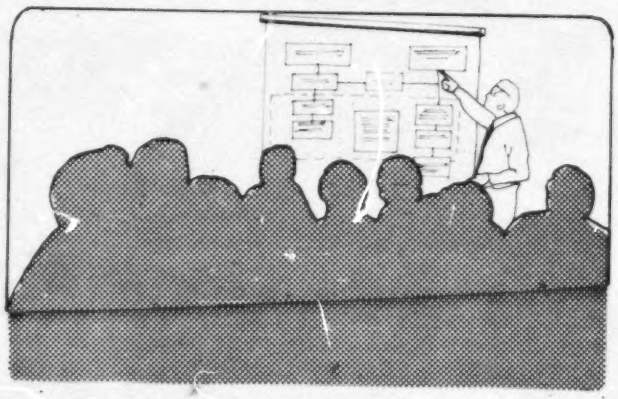

Institute for Development of Educational Activities. ***Shrinking Schools. An I/D/E/A Occasional Paper.*** Dayton, Ohio: 1975. 32 pages. ED 116 292.

One reason for holding conferences is to find out where the experts disagree. At I/D/E/A's national conference on enrollment decline, some of the many prominent authorities attending felt that decline would result in a drop in the pupil/teacher ratio. Others said that the drop in state support would force staff reductions severe enough to drive the ratio up, and still others argued that national experience indicated teachers would fight strongly enough for their positions that the ratio would remain about the same as it has been.

If no agreement could be reached on how the relationship among staffing, funding, and enrollment would be affected, there seemed to be little argument on how the community would respond. Participant Robert Savitt noted that the severe impact of enrollment drops coupled with economic stresses has allowed concerned community groups "to go right to the heart of the educational process in a way that they haven't been able to do before."

The school district's need to stay aware of local population trends was strongly stressed at the gathering. A business representative cited an example of the possible benefits of a positive response to decline: when the birthrate started to fall, Johnson & Johnson redirected its advertising to develop a new adult market, and the result was that over five years its business doubled despite a one-third cut in its original market. But the I/D/E/A conferees could not agree on whether this example indicated that a new market for education should be sought (preschool education, for example) to create revenue and provide jobs, or whether such funding as already existed should be concentrated on providing quality instead. In either case, a good advertising campaign might be crucial for turning public opinion around.

Order copies from I/D/E/A, Mail Orders, P.O. Box 628, Dayton, Ohio 45419. $2.00.

Lyell, Edward H., and **Toole, Patrick.** ***Student Flow Modelling and Enrollment Forecasting.*** New York: Society for College and University Planning, 1974. 5 pages. ED 108 533.

Lyell and Toole claim that even if "good enrollment forecasting techniques exist, they have not been well-applied." Writing for those with some understanding of statistical procedures, the authors highlight the positive and negative aspects of ratio methods, cohort survival methods, Markov models, regression analysis, optimization methods, combinations of these, and even "guess-estimation." As they note, "when it comes time to make a forecast that has to be lived with at the institutional level, model results must be tempered with insight and experience."

The authors discuss forecasting at the national and state levels before citing examples of techniques used in higher education. Although the emphasis is on postsecondary education, the basic problems in generating reliable enrollment estimates also confront the public school administrator.

Lyell and Toole urge cooperation among the different educational systems in order to develop an ongoing and mutually compatible data file that will allow all groups access to the information they need for coping with the future. Research on the effects of significant variables is needed, as well as the development of more innovative methods and techniques that can be validated.

Order from EDRS. MF $0.83 HC $1.67. Specify ED number.

Piatt, Robert S. "A Reorganized Elementary School Structure to Accommodate Declining Enrollment." 1975. 147 pages. ED 111 111.

As assistant to the superintendent of a Pennsylvania school district, the author supervised a restructuring of the elementary system. Of the four communities composing the district, three had two elementary schools and the fourth had one. With a 23 percent drop in enrollment from 1966 to 1975, few schools found themselves left with more than one class at any grade level, and one of these classes contained only 13 pupils.

Piatt's alternative turned one school in each of three communities into a primary (grades 1-3) school, and the other into an intermediate (grades 4-6) school. Benefits he sought and apparently achieved included more balanced class sizes, the possibility of separating problem children, opportunities for multilevel instruction in mathematics and reading, closer professional contact between teachers of the same grade level, unification of communities previously split along artificial school attendance boundaries, and reduction in the duplication of materials and efforts (easing the budgetary headaches of enrollment decline). What difficulties there were appeared

in the area of transportation, but the entire program was nonetheless regarded as highly successful by parents, teachers, administrators, and students.

Piatt's documentation of his program is almost too thorough. He provides a copy of every administrative order he mentions, as well as newspaper clippings and questionnaire forms. The text fills only the first third of the document and is largely a blow-by-blow chronology of the development of the concept from planning stages through implementation to evaluation.

Order from EDRS. MF $0.83 HC $7.35. Specify ED number.

Piele, Philip, and **Wright, Darrell.** ***Enrollment Forecasting. Educational Facilities Digest 1.*** Columbus, Ohio; and Eugene: Council of Educational Facility Planners, International; and ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1976. 9 pages. ED 127 782.

The literature on enrollment forecasting is written from two basic viewpoints. Mathematicians, statisticians, and demographers are interested in finding the ideal methods of forecasting accurately. Administrators and facilities planners are interested in the best techniques for applying the methods that the theorists develop.

Understanding the community and the ways in which it is changing and realizing the effects that social and political pressure groups can have on how factors are interpreted are just as important as knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the different forecasting techniques.

This review provides a brief introduction to the field before presenting an annotated bibliography of 28 major documents covering the full range of attitudes toward enrollment forecasting.

Order copies from Council of Educational Facility Planners, International, 29 West Woodruff Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210. $1.50.
Order MF from EDRS, $0.83. Specify ED number.

Powell, Janet F., and **Stemnock, Suzanne K.** ***Local Policies for Reduction in Force. ERS Information Aid.*** Arlington, Virginia: Educational Research Service, 1975. 18 pages. ED 105 574.

"With the trends of declining enrollments and a tightening economy outdistancing the process of normal staff attrition," teachers and other staff members must face the prospect of termination. While seniority has traditionally been the basis on which such decisions are made, tenure, job-security rights, and equal opportunity employment provisions are all subject to varying legal interpretations.

With faculty and staff growing more militant about job security, administrators must be sure they are prepared for negotiating sessions. They must be certain they have complete facts regarding present and future needs and resources, must consider all the possible techniques for staff reduction short of termination, and must be aware of laws, grievance procedures, timing, rehiring considerations (including effects on seniority), and many other factors.

Probably the best way to cope with the situation is to prepare a written policy, which requires doing the background work, and use it as a basis for negotiations. The bulk of this document consists of 16 examples of such policies and negotiation agreement provisions as they have been devised by school districts around the country.

Order copies from Educational Research Service, Inc., 1815 North Fort Myer Drive, Arlington, Virginia 22209. $3.00, payment must accompany order.

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Sargent, Cyril G., and **Handy, Judith.** ***Fewer Pupils/Surplus Space. A Report.*** New York: Educational Facilities Laboratories, 1974. 55 pages. ED 093 046.

Even if the fertility rate remains at its current replacement level, the large number of women now entering the childbearing years will cause the total number of children born to rise slowly, and enrollments will return to and even surpass previous record highs. The mobility of the population will determine where the trends of decline and return are felt most strongly.

Districts that once could not keep pace with growth now find themselves with empty classrooms, which can be turned to educational or noneducational uses. Government and private agencies, especially in this age of community consciousness, can often find use for vacated space, though whether districts should or can sell, lease, rent, trade, or even give away their unused buildings depends on a great number of legal and practical considerations, as well as expectations of future needs.

When schools are closed, planning is the most important part of the process. Obtaining all the facts and opinions, proposing alternatives, and then choosing the best of the proposals is the only way to be sure of needed community and staff support. How the plan and the planning process are communicated to the people who will be affected is the second major concern. The public's ideas and suggestions must be actively sought, and school board and administrative proceedings kept as open and accessible as possible.

Sargent and Handy's report is probably the outstanding classic in the field, full of examples detailing how theory has been put into practice across the country. Figures and tables complement a readable text, and sources for more information and for obtaining enrollment forecasting tools are provided in abundance.

Order copies from Educational Facilities Laboratories, Inc., 850 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022. $4.00.
Also available from EDRS. MF $0.83 HC $3.50. Specify ED number.

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Sieradski, Karen. *Implications of Declining Enrollments for Schools.* NAESP School Leadership Digest Second Series, Number 4. ERIC/CEM Research Analysis Series, Number 19. Arlington, Virginia: National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1975. 32 pages. ED 114 906.

"Taken positively, the implications of declining enrollments are that enterprising and creative school administrators will develop better programs as they condense them," says Sieradski in this survey of the literature. "They will devise equitable RIF [reduction in force] policies with the teachers' unions and will become even more prominent as public leaders when they unite with community task forces to solve the problems of school closings."

The first step is to forecast enrollments as accurately as possible, both for the near future and for the next 10-25 years. There are many indicators from which the alert observer can deduce a coming enrollment decline, and many methods for developing forecasts. Most often cited among these is the cohort survival technique. But these methods and the figures they generate can be used to support conflicting points by groups with different axes to grind.

Planning by officials is the next major step and must include how programs and personnel are to be cut back and how continued costs are to be met in the face of decreasing state support.

If school closure is necessary, community involvement in planning is vital. Task forces are one excellent way of turning community activism resulting from the undesirable facts of decline into a positive force for reaching acceptable solutions. Alternatives to closure must be considered closely, but if they prove impractical, decisions still remain as to which school to close, and whether to lend, lease, or sell the buildings and grounds.

While the subject is receiving more (and more thorough) attention with each passing year, Sieradski's paper is an excellent condensation of the ideas and attitudes prevalent prior to 1975, especially in relation to the elementary school.

Order copies from National Association of Elementary School Principals, P.O. Box 9114, Arlington, Virginia 22209. $1.50. Payment must accompany order.
Also available from EDRS. MF $0.83 HC $2.06. Specify ED number.

Sinowitz, Betty E., and Hallam, Charlotte. "Fighting Reductions in Force." *Today's Education*, 64, 2 (March-April 1975), pp. 32-34, 96. EJ 131 690.

School administrators can expect teacher associations to put up strong defenses against reductions in force. This article informs teachers of the strategies that are available for resisting arbitrary personnel cutbacks. Teachers can be expected to conduct their own investigation into the need for RIF. They will check the facts, challenge budgeting priorities, and question any failure to make use of all available resources. The teacher's direct contribution to education will be stressed. Administrators will have to show that reducing the pupil/teacher ratio will not adversely affect state or other support.

Normal turnover should alleviate some needs for nonrenewal of contracts. Negotiated obligations and statutory requirements will be closely checked. The authors urge teachers to watch for errors made by school boards caught between late election defeats and early deadlines for notice of nonrenewal. The criteria used for nonrenewal must be objective and nondiscriminatory, with certification the first consideration, followed by seniority, years of experience, education, and so forth.

Sinowitz and Hallam make their point most forcefully by citing court case after court case in which teachers are suing for their rights. When up against organized personnel willing and able to fight back, administrators should take no unnecessary risks.

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